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WAS THERE EVER SUCH A MESS?

In this enlightened age, and in a state as old as Kentucky, one would expect that the representatives of the people, assembled as a lawmaking body, would assume a certain sort of respectability, even though conscious of a lack of it, and make an effort to inject a little dignity into their deliberations.

As it was, with numerous measures of extreme importance on the calendar, ready to be enacted into law, and with ample time to put them through the legislative routine, the members of the House of Representatives conducted themselves like children, permitted bystanders to interfere with proceedings and dispersed in disorder at most equalling the rowdiness of two days before.

It is vain to hope for much improvement in the personnel of the General Assembly.

Year after year, with here and there a notable exception, men absolutely unfit from every standpoint for the duties which rightfully rest upon them, are chosen to represent splendid constituencies, and if they accomplish anything worth while during their legislative term it is due to the active and persistent watchfulness of some man or some interest which is seeking a particular end or object.

One thing, however, is very plain. It will not be possible for any session of the Kentucky Legislature to consider any public question sanely and impartially so long as the liquor problem is uppermost in the minds of the people and the distillers and the brewers remain brutally indifferent to the demands for better regulation of their traffic.

At this session of the General Assembly, with the single exception of the Sunday closing law, every method known to the corruptionists was employed to obstruct temperance legislation. No public object was too sacred to be respected by the liquor lobby and no man was above attack if he was suspected of being untrue to the whiskey cause.

This state of affairs can not endure forever. If the Republican and the Democratic parties, as parties, do not give evidence of a determination to forever free themselves from the evil influences of the unscrupulous lobbyists who really control legislation in this state, the people will find means of settling these questions outside of the parties.

One of the measures which was overlooked in the confusion of the closing hours of the session was the redistricting bill and again in the election two years hence for members of the General Assembly, thousands of the voters of Kentucky will be practically disfranchised.

It was charged weeks ago by Democratic newspapers that the expressed purpose to pass a redistricting bill at this session of the Legislature was simply a movement to make the next General Assembly wet beyond all doubt.

That the suggestion first came from Democratic sources was sufficient in itself to arouse suspicion as to its honesty, because the average machine politician, in either party, is not disposed to surrender a political advantage unless he has concealed a compensating clause somewhere.

It looks now as if this offer or promise to give a just apportionment in Republican sections of the state was part of the general purpose to court the friendly co-operation of the minority Senators and Representatives in passing certain bills, or defeating particular propositions, and then let the Republicans get their redistricting bills through as best they could.

Some of the Republicans who at critical points lined up with "the administration" can now appreciate the situation without the use of a diagram.—Lexington Leader.

Warm applause is being given to those generous corporations that are raising wages, and then paying for the advance twice over by increased prices to the consumer.

It will be a most unpopular stand, but this newspaper is unalterably opposed to pensions for the members of the Ford peace party.

News from the southern resorts tell us how the tired and worn out people are taking the rest cure by dancing until 1 a. m.

Overland

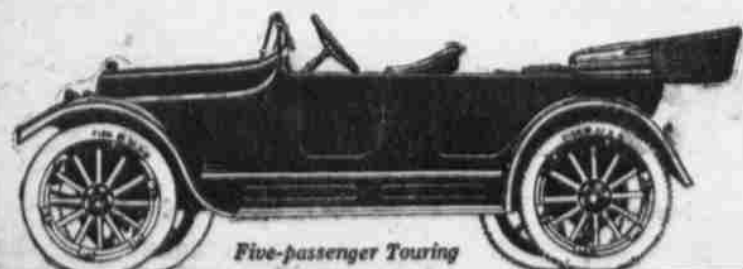
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Stingaree

BY E. W. HORNUNG.

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A DUEL IN THE DESERT.

IT was 5 o'clock and Monday morning when the romantic rascals were led away in unromantic bonds. Their arms were bound to their bodies, their feet lashed to the stirrups. They sat like packs upon quiet station horses carefully chosen for the nonce. They were tethered to a mounted policeman apiece, each with leading rein buckled to his left wrist and government revolver in his right hand. Behind the quartet rode the officer in command, superbly mounted, watching ever all four with a third revolver ready cocked. It seemed a small and yet an ample escort for the two bound men.

But Stingaree was by no means in that state of Napoleonic despair which his bent back and lowering countenance were intended to convey. He had not uttered a word since the arrival of the police, whom he had suffered to lift him on horseback, as he now sat, without raising his morose eyes once. Howie, on the other hand, had offered a good deal of futile opposition, cursing his captors as the fit moved him and once struggling so he managed in his bonds as to earn a tap from the wrong end of a revolver and a bloody face for his pains. Stingaree glowered in deep delight. His mate's part was as well acted as his own, but it was he who had conceived them both and expounded them in countless camps against some such extremity as this. The result was in ideal accordance with his calculations. The man who gave the trouble was the man to watch. And Stingaree, chin on chest, was left in peace to evolve a way of escape.

The chances were all adverse; he had never been less sanguine in his life. Not that Stingaree had much opinion of the police—he had slipped through their hands too often—but it was an unfortunate circumstance that two of the present trio were among those whom he had eluded most recently and who therefore would be least likely to give him another chance. A lightning student of his kind, he based his only hope upon an accurate estimate of these men and applied his whole mind to the triple task. But it was a stupid task almost from the first, for the policeman in charge of him was none other than his credulous old friend, Sergeant Cameron from Clear Corner, and Howie's custodian a young trooper run from the same mold as Constable Tyler and many a hundred more, in whom a thick skull canceled a stout heart. Both were brave men; neither was really to be feared. But the man behind upon the thoroughbred, the man in front, the man now on this side and now on that, with his braying laugh and his vindictive voice—triumphant as though he had taken the bushrangers himself and a blatant bully in his triumph—was none other than the formidable superintendent whose undying animosity the bushrangers had earned by the two escapades associated with his name.

Yet the outlaw never flattered him with word or look, never lifted chin from chest, never raised an eye or opened his mouth until Howie's knock on the head caused him to curse his mate for a fool who deserved all he got. The thoroughbred was creaking on his other side in an instant.

"You ain't one, are you?" cried the taunting tongue of Superintendent Cairns. "Not much fool about Stingaree!"

"The time had come for a reply. 'So I thought until yesterday,' sighed the bushranger. 'But now I'm not so sure.'"

"Not so sure, eh? You were sure enough the last time we met, my beauty!"

"Yes, I had some conceit of myself then," said Stingaree, with another of his convincing sighs.

"To say nothing of when you guyed me, blast you!" added the superintendent below his breath and through his teeth.

"Well," replied the outlaw, "you've got your revenge. I must expect you to rub it in."

"My fine friend," rejoined Cairns, "you may expect worse than that, and still you won't be disappointed."

By degrees Stingaree raised his chin a little, but still looked neither right nor left.

"Cheer up!" cried the chief, with soothing irony.

"I feel the heat," said the bound man uncomplainingly. "And it was just about here it happened."

"What happened?"

"We overtook the church militia here upon earth," rejoined the bushranger, with rueful irreverence.

"Well, you ran against a snag that time, Mr. Sanguinary Stingaree!"

"I couldn't resist turning Howie into the bushes and making myself his mouthpiece. I daren't let him open his lips! It wasn't the offer that was worth having; it was the fun of rounding up that congregation on the home-stead veranda and never letting them spot a thing till we showed our guns. There hadn't been a hitch, and there never would have been if that old blabber hadn't run all those miles barefoot over hot sand and taken us unaware."

Made with a very humor and a philosophic candor, these remarks seemed natural enough to one knowing little of Stingaree. They seemed just the sort of things that Stingaree would say. The effect, however, was rather to glorify Bishop Methuen at the expense of Superintendent Cairns, who strove to reverse it with some dexterity.

"You certainly ran against a snag," he repeated, "and now your mate's run against another." He gave the butt of his ready pistol a significant tap. "But I'm the worst snag that ever either of you struck," he went on in his vainglory. "Make no mistake about that. And the worst day's work that ever you did in your life, Mr. Sanguinary Stingaree, was when you dared play at being little spotted Cairns."

Stingaree took a first good look at his mate. After all he was not so crooked and hunched as he had seemed on foot as dusk of the Victorian bush, his

stump was even less pronounced than Stingaree himself had made it on Rossano; it looked more like a ridge of extra muscles across a pair of almost maily broad and powerful shoulders. There was the absence of neck which this deformity suggests; there was a great head lighted by flashing and indignant eyes, but mounted only on its mighty chin.

"The most poetic justice!" murmured Stingaree, and resumed in an instant his apathetic pose.

"It serves you jolly well right, if that's what you mean," the superintendent snarled. "You've yourself and your own mighty cheek to thank for taking me out of my shell and putting me on your tracks in earnest. But it was high time they knew the cut of my jib up here; the fools won't forget me again in a hurry. And you, you devil, shan't forget me till your dying day!"

On Stingaree's off side Sergeant Cameron was also hanging an insulted head. But the bushranger laughed softly in his chest.

"Some one has got to do your dirty work," said he. "I did it that time, and the bishop has done it now, but you shouldn't blame me for helping your fellows to bring a murderer to justice."

"You guyed me," said Cairns through his teeth. "I heard all about it. You guyed me, blast your soul!"

Stingaree felt that he was missing a strong face finely convulsed with passion—indeed he was. But he had already committed the indiscretion of a repartee which was scarcely consistent with an attitude of extreme despair. A downcast silence seemed the safest policy after all.

"It used to be forty miles to the Corner," he murmured, after a time. "We can't have come more than ten."

"Not so much," snapped the superintendent.

"Going to stop for a feed at Ma-zappa station?"

"That's my business."

"It's a long day for three of you, in this heat, with two of us."

"The time won't hang heavy on our hands."

"Not heavy enough, I should have thought. I wonder you didn't bring some of the boys from Mulera along with you."

Superintendent Cairns brayed his high, harsh laugh.

"Yes, you wonder, and so did they," said he. "But I know a bit too much."

"You're too suspicious," said Stingaree mildly. "But I was thinking of the bishop and the boys."

"They've gone their own way," growled Cairns, "and it's just as well it



They Reined Up, Made Him Dismount and Lashed Him Tighter.

wasn't our way. I'd have stood no interference from them!"

That had been his attitude on the station. Stingaree had heard of his rudeness to those to whom the whole credit of the capture belonged. The man revealed his character as freely as an angry child.

The party pushed on for another hour. The heat was terrible. The bound men endured torments in their bonds. But the nature of the superintendent, deformed, like his body, declared itself duly at every turn, and the more one prisoner groaned and the other blasphemed the greater the zest and obduracy of the driving force behind them.

(To be continued)

AT END OF STRING

Mr. Groundhog Has Run Out of His Six Weeks' Retirement, But Seems To Be Still On the Job.

The groundhog has had his inning. Wednesday was the last day that "prognosticator" could hold the indicator on the weather conditions and has moved out to allow some one else to get on the weather job and say what we are to have.

However, he took advantage of the last day of grace and dished out an assortment of stuff called "weather," that made his February work insignificant, beginning on Tuesday with balmy breezes and cute little spring zephyrs that by midnight had turned into blizzards winds from the north-west, accompanied by one of the heaviest snows of the winter, and on Thursday morning, just to make things good for him as a sure-enough weather breeder, he gave us a run toward zero.

And now it is to be hoped that the ding-busted old critter will never find that hole again and that we will have something that has the resemblance of weather.

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DANISH-WEST INDIES

Likely To Be Taken Over By the United States—Danish Government Willing To Sell.

Washington, D. C.—The Danish West Indies are likely to become American possessions in the immediate future, according to those who have watched the course of events leading up to the recent announcement from Copenhagen, suggesting the willingness of the Danish government to sell the islands. Several times in the past there have been movements to acquire these islands, but the negotiations fell through, for various reasons. There is a new importance attached to the little islands since the digging of the Panama Canal, for their possession by an aggressive enemy might threaten the safety of the canal in time of war.

The three islands involved in the offer of Denmark are St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. They have an area of about 138 square miles, and a population of 33,000, mostly negroes. Raising of sugarcane is the only industry of these islands.

Frequent reports have been made of the use of the harbors of these islands by German commerce destroyers at the outset of the European war. It was said at that time that Denmark was powerless to protect the neutrality of the islands, but the fact of their use, if clearly established, gives a clear lesson to the United States as to the value of these little corners of the Caribbean to nation owning the Panama Canal and upholding the Monroe Doctrine.

If not the sole, at least the most vital reason suggesting the purchase of these islands by the United States, is their strategic importance and the likelihood of their control passing into the hands of some European power whose ownership would constitute a menace to the military interests of the United States.

There is very good circumstantial evidence, it is said here, to support the report that Germany looks forward to ownership of the Danish West Indies. In the past, when the United States sought to buy them, it was German influence in Copenhagen which intervened to prevent the sale. That was only six years ago, in 1910. Some ten years before that time, there was a movement to buy the islands for four millions of dollars, but the project fell through in Congress.

Congress awoke to the situation in 1910, and the United States again revived the question of purchase. At first the Danes manifested a willingness to sell the islands, but of a sudden, and for reasons never made fully clear, this offer of sale was withdrawn by Denmark, and she remained absolutely indifferent to further suggestions of purchase. It was in this section attempt at purchase that the German influence was exhibited, it is said.

That Denmark has now voluntarily brought forward suggestions of a sale is believed to indicate that the Danes think the present moment a favorable one to disregard the injunctions of Berlin. The hope is expressed in diplomatic circles here that Congress will prove liberal enough to grant the comparatively small appropriation needed for the purchase, about five millions.

It has never been doubted here but that Denmark would be glad to part with these possessions of hers for a reasonable sum at any time. As the Copenhagen reports say, industrial and social conditions in the islands are not favorable. The Danes lack the naval power to maintain effective control, 3,000 miles away from the home government, and her facilities for proper administration and development are equally limited. Recent strikes among the plantation laborers have served to make matters worse. But under American control conditions could be materially changed for the better.

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